

MEAT AND POTATOES

By Kathleen Nelson

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I am a meat and potatoes person. Not that I mean I demand thick juicy seasoned steak and a double helping of potatoes at every dinner. Though I wouldn't mind that. In fact, in that sense, I really am a meat and potatoes person. Salads are too dainty for me, not filling! And there's nothing better than biting into a hot, tender, well-seasoned piece of beef with the juices running all over your tongue... but that's not the point! I mean in this sense, I want to get right to the heart of things. No stalling. No preliminaries. Just give me the basics outright and I'm happy.

I mean don't you hate it when someone's trying to get to a point, and they just trail on and on and on... like this one time! I was reading a story and the opening was just this one guy going on and on and on about some opinion he has that had nothing to do with the point of the story and I kept thinking, "Who cares! I'm not reading this to hear your little rants, so just get on with the plot!"

I mean honestly, do those people think others just want to sit around and hear them gossip and complain? I have this one friend who can't tell a single story unless she goes into every detail and all kinds of backstories and histories that I simply do not care about! For example: this one time she was complaining about her ex-boyfriend, Josh- she and Josh dated for over a year. It was really nice at first; you could tell they were really happy. I was kind of jealous; my own love life wasn't going so well, I hadn't had a date in months. But I wasn't exactly trying, you know? I'd had enough of those really awkward dates when you can tell the other person is uncomfortable, and they'd rather be somewhere else, and they won't make eye contact with you and all you can do is smile and think "oh my gosh they must hate me!" and just retreat into your shell. I've had *lots* of dates like that. I guess I'm not very "romantic." But I mean, really, what is romantic? It's all relative, subjective... I mean, for some people, romance is nothing short of a Disney fairytale... for others, it could just be going to McDonalds, telling jokes, and sharing a large order of fries. I had a date like that once. Except it was at a Wendy's, not a McDonalds. I wasn't really in the mood for a McHeart Attack. But anyway. This date. It was... well, magical. You see? I can be romantic if I want. I just remember sitting there, looking into their

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eyes. They weren't afraid to make eye contact with me. They didn't want to be somewhere else. They didn't hate me. There was a real special connection between us, you know, and I could just feel it...

But that's a different story. You know how it goes. You meet someone, you talk, you get to know them, you think, "wow, maybe this time it's for real..." and then it all just comes back and smacks you in the face. I don't even know what that date is up to anymore. I can't remember their name, either. Started with a B... I don't know, I can't remember. It was all so long ago. Things like that get hazy for me after a while, you know?

Not like my friend. Not like when she was complaining about Josh. Geez, she just went on and on and on! Telling me some story he told her from before they were dating. Something about a fourth grade project he copied from someone else. And she was saying something like, "I should have known even then that he was no good! I should have listened to my mother! She *always* knows what's best for me!" I mean, honestly, why does it *matter*? You broke up with the guy, who cares about some story like that now! I mean the fourth grade? Really?

And honestly, who remembers stuff like that? She was giving me exact dates he told her, for crying out loud. How does she remember that? How does *he*? I mean, I can hardly remember back to my college years, getting my masters in Grecian Architecture. It's all a blur! Not that I was drunk for most of it, mind you. That wasn't my style. No, I was sober through my college years. I was the one who studied in their dorm, alone, while everyone else went to Frat parties and got in trouble with the cops... I was the one that everyone came to for answers, but no one came for a social visit... not that I'm complaining! I disliked having distractions from my studies (I mean, come on, Grecian Architecture? Gorgeous as it is, it gets really boring really fast, and distractions can be as slight as a door creaking.) But maybe I was lonely... and I blocked it out, and that's why I don't remember... but that's not the point!

And really, her mother always knows what's best for her? How old is she, five? Does her mother still dress her, too? I can't remember the last time I went to my mother for advice. She wasn't really good at it, you know? She'd just try to quote other witty sounding sayings, and fail miserably. "When life gives you lemons, don't forget to smile, because the world's a stage and when you laugh, God opens a window for you!" No joke. She seriously told me that one once. I think it was after my first major break up. I was crying on the phone. I mean, my heart was in *pieces*! The love of my life had just destroyed me. We'd dated for years.

It was really romantic how we met, too. I know I said I'm not the romantic type, but really, this was so perfect... It was raining. But it was still sunny. Don't you love that weather? There's nothing quite like it. It's beautiful. But anyway. It was raining and I was trying to run for cover. I literally bumped into them on the street. I looked up at them to apologize... and I gasped. Their eyes were sparkling in the sun, and the clear drops of rain reflected rainbows all around us, like diamonds falling from the sky... it was pretty romantic. We had a great thing going, too, and I was ready for the next step... but what do you think happens, but they go and fall in love with their ex from college. I was devastated.

I guess I should be happy, though. The two got married. I got invited to their wedding. I didn't go of course; I thought it was really callous of them to ask me!

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